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## **The Valaam Myth and Fate of Leningrad's Disabled Veterans\***

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### **Abstract**

This article explores an enduring Soviet myth, the myth of Valaam. According to this widely believed story in 1946 or 1947 vagrant disabled veterans were forcibly cleared from the streets of Soviet cities and deported to Valaam, an isolated archipelago of fifty islands, approximately 250 kilometres north of Leningrad. These myths continue to be repeated by both historians and the general public, but little evidence has been provided to support them. This article provides original archival evidence about the myth's two main components: the clearance of disabled veterans from the streets and their subsequent exile to Valaam. For the first time it demonstrates the existence of an invalid's home on Valaam, but which challenges the "facts" of the myth. Attempts were made to clear the disabled vagrants from Leningrad's streets, but these did not occur in 1946 or 1947, and were neither successful nor systematic. Although a residential institution for the elderly and disabled was established on Valaam, which had its own unedifying history, it was not a dumping ground for thousands of disabled veterans cleared from urban areas. The Valaam myth is a classic example of a "false myth"; a story with only a flimsy basis in reality, but which reveals wider truths about the circumstances in which the myth was generated, and the mentalities of the individuals and society which accepted it. Having established the reality behind the myth, this article uses the Valaam myth as a lens for examining the plight of Leningrad's war disabled and the mentalities of those who believed and transmitted the myth. The article argues that these stories thrived because they were plausible, and it offers a number of explanations why Soviet citizens, and Leningraders in particular, believed this myth. Imperial and Soviet Russia had a long history of forced clearance of "socially marginal elements" and precedents of exiling them to isolated islands. Most importantly, Leningraders believed in the existence of a mythical dumping ground for disabled veterans because it accorded with their knowledge of the state's coercive practices and their experiences of the treatment of disabled veterans.

This article attempts to use one of the most enduring Soviet urban myths, the Valaam myth, to re-examine the fate of Leningrad's most vulnerable and severely disabled Great Patriotic War veterans. According to this widespread story sometime in the late 1940s or early 1950s Stalin ordered that Soviet cities were cleared of the many impoverished disabled ex-servicemen begging on street corners, at railways stations, markets and other public spaces. These unfortunates were exiled to special institutions in remote parts of the country. The most infamous of these was Valaam, an archipelago of fifty islands approximately 250 kilometres north from Leningrad and twenty kilometres from the northern shore of Lake Ladoga, Europe's largest lake.

These myths and rumours have captured the imaginations of both professional historians and members of the public. Several studies of the Great Patriotic War and the post-war period relate them as fact, often with little or no supporting evidence.<sup>1</sup> Leningrad's historians often place the city at the centre of this myth. They suggest that a colony for disabled veterans, populated with war invalids cleared from Leningrad, was established on Valaam.<sup>2</sup> This local version of the myth, centred on Leningrad and its multiple amputees, has been recounted to me numerous times by friends, acquaintances, archivists and librarians. Oral history respondents, interviewed as part of my doctoral research into the demobilization of Red Army veterans in post-war Leningrad, frequently retold the story without prompting.<sup>3</sup> On a number of occasions, usually as I switched off my tape recorder, veterans suggested that I should really be researching what happened to the war invalids exiled to Valaam. Out of modesty, politeness and genuine conviction they maintained that their own difficult experiences of post-war readjustment, were nothing compared to those disabled veterans excluded from society.

In recent years historians have made great progress in documenting the extraordinary hardships faced by disabled veterans after 1945. Elena Zubkova, Elena Seniavskaia, Beate

Fieseler and Mark Edele have done much to deepen our understanding of the challenges faced by war invalids in reintegrating into post-war society. They have explored the processes by which many disabled ex-servicemen and women were excluded from workplaces, pushed aside by welfare bureaucracies, failed by medical institutions and marginalised by wider society.<sup>4</sup> Mark Edele and Beate Fieseler, in particular, have drawn attention to the Valaam story, and laid important foundations upon which this re-examination of these rumours builds.<sup>5</sup>

The origins of the Valaam myth are impossible to establish with certainty. The memoirs of foreign observers hint that rumours of the establishment of isolated institutions for the mutilated or the clearance of the disabled from the streets may have been in circulation in the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>6</sup> There is, however, a strong possibility that these sources, like oral testimony, were influenced by the development of a shared collective memory in subsequent decades.<sup>7</sup> *The Gulag Archipelago* contains a short passage suggesting that the ranks of disabled veterans, who had gathered around markets, tearooms and suburban trains were ‘swiftly and discreetly thinned’ after the war. Solzhenitsyn relates the rumour of a campaign to exile mutilated veterans to an unknown northern island, and deny them contact with the outside world.<sup>8</sup> By the mid-to-late 1960s, when *The Gulag Archipelago* was written, these rumours were clearly in circulation, although the connection with Valaam was not fixed in the popular consciousness. *The Gulag Archipelago*’s publication in the West in the 1970s, and within the Soviet Union in *samizdat*, helped further disseminate these rumours.

Most academic retellings of the Valaam myth, however, can be traced back to Yuri Nagibin’s novella *Patience (Terpenie)*, published in *Novyi Mir* in 1982, or Vera Dunham’s summary of its plot in a chapter examining images of the disabled in Soviet literature.<sup>9</sup> In the absence of alternative information *Patience* has often be used as source of evidence about Valaam.<sup>10</sup> The story is set on Bogoyar, a fictional equivalent of Valaam, which in Dunham’s

words, “served as a terminal shelter for those who were maimed by war and who either had not wanted to return to their homes, or who were refused acceptance there.”<sup>11</sup> Although Nagibin apparently visited Valaam, *Patience* was probably informed by rumours and myths already in circulation. Similarly, *Patience* may have breathed life into a pre-existing oral tradition, reshaping and distorting the myth in the process. One alleged eyewitness account of what happened on Valaam, for example, draws upon Nagibin’s novella and owes a clear debt to its storytelling.<sup>12</sup> Other evidence is fragmentary. In April 1984 the Paris-based émigré newspaper *Russkaia Mysl’* published an article by dissident poet Iurii Kublanovskii in which he recounted encountering amputees, including one amputee who had been on the island since 1952, on a visit to Valaam in 1981.<sup>13</sup> In May 1988 *Literaturnaia gazeta* published a portrait of Alexander Podonesov an inmate of the Valaam colony paralysed whilst fighting in Karelia, drawn by the anti-war artist Gennadi Dobrov.<sup>14</sup> The memoirs of one German visitor to Valaam, published in 1989, recounted his shock at encountering ‘hordes’ of disabled veterans who begged tourists visiting Valaam for food, money and vodka.<sup>15</sup> This evidence hardly provides solid foundations for some historians’ confident assertions about either the clearance of disabled beggars from Soviet cities or their exile to Valaam. However, by the late 1980s perhaps inspired by the growing openness of glasnost’, the Valaam myth appears to have taken a grip on popular memory.

In this article I present newly discovered archival evidence, examined here for the first time, proving the existence of an invalids’ home (*dom invalidov*) on Valaam, but which disputes the central “facts” of the myth. I argue that the myth is comprised of two elements: the story of street clearances and subsequent exile to Valaam. I demonstrate that attempts were made to clear Leningrad’s streets of disabled veterans. But these did not occur in 1946 or 1947, as many versions of the myth suggest, and were neither systematic nor successful. Far from containing thousands of disabled veterans cleared from the streets of Soviet cities,

the Valaam *dom invalidov* was initially a relatively small institution housing disabled veterans and other vulnerable individuals from Karelia. Having established the reality behind the Valaam story, I explore why Leningraders believed these rumours and myths, and what these “false memories” and misrememberings reveal about the treatment of the war disabled in post-war Leningrad. In short, Leningraders believed in the existence of a mythical dumping ground for the war disabled, because it accorded with their own knowledge of the state’s coercive practices and their experiences of the treatment of disabled veterans.

Valaam has always been a place surrounded by a miasma of legend, mystery and mysticism.<sup>16</sup> Monastic communities have been central to Valaam’s history, although the precise details of when this monastic tradition began have been lost in the depths of a mythical past. Current research places the foundation of the Valaam monastery as part of the monastic colonization of north western Russian in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The recently discovered *Tale of the Valaam monastery (Skazanie o Valaamskom monastyre)* dates the foundation between 1389 and 1415.<sup>17</sup> The monastery, located on the turbulent borderlands between Russia, Sweden and Finland, has a rich and complex history. The first monastic foundation survived until the beginning of the seventeenth century when a war between Sweden and Muscovy forced its closure. Valaam was left deserted until around 1717 when monks from the Kirillo-Belozerskii monastery re-established a monastery on Valaam, following Peter the Great’s recapture of the islands in 1715. In 1917 Valaam was succeeded to an independent Finland, and responsibility for the monastery passed to the Finnish Orthodox Church. The monastery continued to function until early 1940 when it was evacuated during the Soviet-Finnish War. The islands officially returned to Soviet control in 1944, and a religious community was re-established in 1991.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout its history Valaam has possessed a remarkable capacity to attract pilgrims and visitors, to captivate individuals as well the popular imagination. The medieval monks

settling on Valaam were no doubt attracted by the islands' natural beauty and spiritual tranquillity. These same qualities made the archipelago a source of inspiration for landscape painters between the 1850s and 1870s. Shishkin, Levitan, Vasilyev and Kuinzhi all spent time on Valaam depicting its rugged beauty.<sup>19</sup> Alexander II and the imperial family visited in 1858 as part of a tour of the Russian provinces.<sup>20</sup> In July 1858 Alexandre Dumas made a similar excursion, finding Valaam's monastery the, "first piece of architecture (he) had seen in Russia that (he) found completely satisfying."<sup>21</sup> In the 1930s Finland began to exploit the archipelago as a tourist destination. By the end of the decade approximately 30,000 tourists, including representatives of thirty countries, were visiting annually.<sup>22</sup> In the late 1950s and early 1960s the islands began to be developed as a Soviet tourist destination.<sup>23</sup> A permanent tourist base was established in the spring of 1967.<sup>24</sup> The islands, accessible by boat from Leningrad or Sortavala, became a popular excursion. Indeed, the presence of growing numbers of tourists on Valaam may have an important source of information about the presence of disabled veterans on the islands, contributing to the solidifying urban-myth.<sup>25</sup> Valaam, declared a national park in 1999, has undergone a remarkable post-Soviet revival and continues to attract visitors. Post-Soviet Russians rediscovering their orthodox roots are keen to visit Valaam's resurgent religious community. Vladimir Putin, who has personally supported Valaam's reconstruction, has been a frequent visitor to the island and its monastery in recent years and appears to appreciate its attractions.<sup>26</sup>

For centuries people have attempted to make sense of the history of this enigmatic place through a mixture of myth and legend. When in the nineteenth century attempts were made to produce histories for the many pilgrims and tourists interested in Valaam, the lack of documentary material, meant that local legends and even forged manuscripts became the basis of both popular and scholarly histories.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the oldest story contributing to the mystical image of Valaam was the legend that the apostle Andrew had visited Valaam and



blessed the land for Christian worship.<sup>28</sup> Another popular myth which, “can be found in practically all of the historical accounts on the history of Valaam in the nineteenth century” was that having been rescued from shipwreck by the monks of Valaam, the medieval Swedish king Magnus Eriksson became an orthodox monk, and spent the rest of his life on Valaam.<sup>29</sup> Valaam’s status as a place of mysticism and legend made it the ideal backdrop for new myths developing after the Great Patriotic War.

Historians of Stalinism have long appreciated the value of rumours as evidence. In the early 1950s the pioneering Harvard Interview Project investigated its respondents’ attitudes towards rumours, as well as other word-of-mouth communication.<sup>30</sup> Robert Conquest advocated the use of political and police rumours in his study of the Great Terror.<sup>31</sup> Writing in the mid 1980s Arch-Getty attacked the value of rumour and anecdote for political historians. However, in the 1990s social historians of Stalinism, with access to newly opened archives, embraced rumours, jokes, gossip, stories and urban myths as evidence.<sup>32</sup> Historians have approached rumours in a variety of ways, reflecting the variety of functions rumours served.<sup>33</sup> In a society where news was tightly controlled by the state’s propaganda apparatus, rumour acted as an alternative source of information. The paucity of official information about Kirov’s murder in Leningrad on December 1, 1934, for example, created a void in which rumours thrived.<sup>34</sup> Historians, particularly of the 1930s, have convincingly argued that rumour functioned as space for the articulation of popular dissent, sedition, protest and/or resistance.<sup>35</sup> The regime’s obsession with monitoring and documenting expressions of anti-Soviet sentiment, which preserved rumours for historians, perhaps explains why this approach dominates writing about Soviet rumours.

Rumours were not simply sources of news or sedition, but also part of individuals’ and collectives’ attempts to make sense of the world around them. This approach to rumour has proved particularly productive for historians of Revolutionary France. Georges

Lefebvre's classic study of rural panic and Bronisław Baczko examination of urban political gossip both examine rumour as a means of understanding the mentalities of the individuals and societies which generated them.<sup>36</sup> Urban myths about Valaam are an excellent example of what Baczko terms "false rumours". Much about them is, "false, implausible and fantastic", but this does not reduce them to worthless anecdotes. As he argues:

"It is a commonplace, too often forgotten, that a false rumour is a real social fact; in that it conceals a portion of historical truth – not about the news that it spreads, but about the conditions that make its emergence and circulation possible, about the state of mind, the *mentalities* and imagination of those who accepted it as true."<sup>37</sup>

Stories about Valaam circulated in Leningrad because they were plausible. Ordinary citizens' knowledge and experience of the Stalinist system and its practices led them to believe that the war disabled could be cleared from the streets and dumped in isolated locations. Furthermore, as Alessandro Portelli has argued "wrong tales" are valuable precisely because of their "errors". Mistakes, inventions and myths take oral historians beyond facts to explore the meaning of events, enhancing the value of oral sources as historical documents.<sup>38</sup> Far from rendering the Valaam myth worthless, the discrepancies between the memory and reality revealed by this research prompt a re-examination of the treatment of disabled veterans in Leningrad and its environs. Although the "facts" of the Valaam myth are inaccurate, the reasons for its persistence and longevity reveal wider truths about the social position of Leningrad's disabled veterans.

Leningrad was a city awash with rumour. Rumours and the oral transmission of information, which had played such an important part in Leningraders' lives, especially during the blockade, continued to thrive after 1945. Exhausted and traumatized by the

privations and horrors of the blockade Leningraders were particularly susceptible to rumour. Material shortages, poor living conditions and widespread social anxieties, particularly about the return of family members from evacuation or the armed forces, created a tense psychological atmosphere in which rumours thrived.<sup>39</sup> Sections of the population interpreted price rises and food shortages as signs of impending disaster, fearing the advent of war, a second blockade or both. Fears of crime led to rumours of criminal gangs. Rumours of the currency devaluation had circulated before the secret announcement prompting panic and a stripping of the shops. Rumours circulated widely in queues, shops, in workplaces and in public baths. Locally generated rumours were no-doubt supplemented by those imported by new arrivals and returning Leningraders. Demobilized ex-servicemen, in particular, brought with them rumours, and first-hand information, about the material abundance of countries beyond the Soviet Union, as well rumours about the dismantling of the collective farm system.<sup>40</sup> The extraordinary fluidity of Leningrad's population, characterized by thousands of people arriving in the city on an almost daily basis, and uncounted others passing through it, created ideal conditions for the transmission of rumours within and beyond the city.

Rumours that disabled veterans were cleared from Leningrad's streets in 1946 or 1947 were not formed in vacuum. The Soviet Union had "a well established tradition" of removing marginal groups, such as beggars, tramps and prostitutes, from cities without judicial process, which have become the focus of increasing scholarly attention.<sup>41</sup> Recent research has examined the periodic campaigns to remove socially marginal groups from urban areas. It is now possible to begin to situate rumours, stories and myths about Valaam within a historical context of the treatment of "socially harmful elements". This contextual material, far from confirming the rumours of street clearances in the immediate post-war period, challenges one of the central strands of the Valaam myth as told today, namely that war-disabled beggars disappeared in 1946 or 1947.

The difficulties of reintegrating retired, demobilized or disabled veterans into civilian society during and after the Great Patriotic War were not unique. Imperial Russia was also confronted with vagrancy, including amongst veterans, and developed a range of coercive solutions, which the Bolsheviks inherited.<sup>42</sup> Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries disabled individuals frequently found themselves excluded from their communities and deported to Siberia.<sup>43</sup> The First World War, the Revolutions of 1917, Russian Civil War and famine unleashed unprecedented levels of social and economic dislocation, intensifying pre-existing levels of vagrancy.<sup>44</sup> By 1922 nearly seven million orphaned and abandoned children (*besprizornye deti*) had been created by war, revolution and famine.<sup>45</sup> Although “socially marginals” inundated cities, they were frequently treated as inherited anomalies, which would gradually disappear and therefore required no special action. However, from the late 1920s, as collectivization and forced industrialization brought new waves of beggars, tramps and orphans to cities, new coercive measures were developed.<sup>46</sup> Clearing socially marginal individuals and groups from urban public spaces became an integral part of the Stalinist project to cleanse, beautify and modernize society.<sup>47</sup> As Paul Hagenloth and David Shearer have demonstrated the terror of the 1930s went beyond a purge of party, industrial and military cadres. Repressive campaigns to clear socially marginal individuals and groups became a routine feature of Stalinist policing in the 1930s.<sup>48</sup> Passports and residence permits (*propiski*) became important tools for indentifying and purging unproductive, criminal and marginal individuals.<sup>49</sup> With the radicalization of policing practices in the 1930s, mass operations rounding up and expelling “anti-Soviet elements” from marketplaces, train stations and districts housing itinerant workers became increasingly important in the purification of urban space. NKVD order №00192, for example, passed on May 9, 1935, with the aim of targeting “socially harmful elements”, unleashed a mass campaign resulting

in the arrest of approximately 266,000 people by the end of 1935, including 26,530 in Leningrad.<sup>50</sup>

Until recently little was known about the extent of, and state responses to, vagrancy during and after the Great Patriotic War. As Fitzpatrick reminds us; “This is undoubtedly not because the problem disappeared but because the state’s attention was elsewhere.”<sup>51</sup> Detailed statistics recording the number of beggars were not kept by social security departments.<sup>52</sup> However, while the government devoted itself to reconstruction and fulfilling the fourth Five Year Plan, the increase in vagrancy did not go unnoticed. A social and economic catastrophe which displaced, orphaned, made homeless and crippled millions of Soviet citizens was bound to leave highly visible traces. As a result of the 1946-1947 famine the number of beggars within the Soviet Union may have reached as many as 2-3 million.<sup>53</sup> According to Edele; “War invalids formed an important part of the subculture of beggars, vagrants, and small-time con men who lived at train stations, travelled from town to town, begged, stole, engaged in small-scale-trade, and beleaguered state institutions with requests for money and help.”<sup>54</sup> Until the early 1950s it was a common experience to encounter disabled veterans as well as other vagrants begging at stations, on public transport, at market places, and other public spaces.<sup>55</sup> Vagrancy, petty criminality and the semi-legal shadow economy all thrived in liminal spaces, through which people were continually passing.<sup>56</sup> Zima estimates that in the mid 1950s the number of beggars within the Soviet Union oscillated between 500,000 and a million people.<sup>57</sup>

Although municipal authorities were never comfortable with the presence of so many vagrants in their cities, in the immediate wake of war the impulse towards mass deportations were largely restrained. Persistent beggars appear to have been dealt with by enforcing the

passport regime and the efforts of the social-security system rather than the mass NKVD operations of the 1930s.<sup>58</sup> Whilst FSB archives remain closed to researchers it is impossible to state with absolute certainty that there was no campaign to round up disabled veterans in 1946 and 1947. Historians, who have searched for it, have found no documentary evidence to confirm the rumour.<sup>59</sup> In his examination of beggars, vagrants and prostitutes in post-war Leningrad one historian, with privileged access to closed archives, makes no reference to a decision or campaign to clear disabled veterans from the streets.<sup>60</sup>

Recent research suggests that post-war operations against beggars were foreshadowed, and partly inspired, by a decree passed on February 21, 1948, by Ukrainian Communist Party Secretary, N. S. Khrushchev. It proposed granting *kolkhoz* general assemblies in the Ukraine the power to exile delinquents and ‘anti-social parasitical elements’ from their communities. On June 2, 1948, this law was extended to the entire Soviet Union. Approximately 33,000 parasites were excluded between 1948 and 1953.<sup>61</sup> It was not until 1951, however, that a more systematic campaign deporting tramps, beggars and socially marginal elements from urban areas was initiated. On July 23, 1951, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet issued a decree “On measures for the struggle with anti-social, parasitical elements.” It sanctioned five year sentences of exile to special-settlements in remote regions for able-bodied individuals arrested for begging who had, “persistently (refused) socially-useful work and (led) a parasitical way of life, as well as tramps, who had no definite occupation and place of residence.”<sup>62</sup> Khrushchev’s metaphorical finger-prints were again on the legislation. The All-Union law had grown out of an operation Khrushchev, now Moscow Party Secretary, had proposed against begging (*nishchenstvo*) on July 18, 1951, for Moscow and the Moscow oblast.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the shared use of the phrase “anti-social, parasitical way of life” Zubkova cautions against viewing the July 1951 law as an “urban equivalent” of the June 1948 law.<sup>64</sup> The two laws targeted different social groups, one unproductive *kolkhozniki* the other urban social marginals. Furthermore, the impact of the July 1951 law was much greater. It launched what has been termed “an energetic campaign against beggars” which continued into 1954.<sup>65</sup> According to secret USSR Ministry of the Interior figures from February 1954 the law resulted in mass arrests: 107,766 in the second half of 1951, 156,817 in 1952 and 182,342 in 1953. Seventy per cent of these totals were disabled war or labor veterans.<sup>66</sup>

Like all major Soviet cities Leningrad had its fair share of problems with beggars, vagrants and social marginals after 1945. Leningraders often recalled seeing amputees pushing themselves around on small trolleys, begging or engaging in petty trade. Police reports confirm the picture that Leningrad’s war-disabled were heavily involved in speculation, crime and disorderly behaviour in public spaces. Markets were a particular cause of concern. In August 1945, for example, a police report examining Leningraders not engaged in socially useful work noted that unemployed war invalids were regularly visiting the city’s markets, in order to buy up goods and resell them at a profit.<sup>67</sup> On September 25, 1945, *Leningradskaia pravda* published a letter to the editor complaining about the neglected state of the Mal’tsevskii market, one of the city’s central markets. Surrounded by heaps of dirt, coke, broken bricks, stones and stagnant puddles, the market, “created the impression (in fact this more than ‘an impression’) that the market has been abandoned to the mercy of its fate, and that neither representatives of the Dzerzhinskii district Soviet, nor the sanitary inspectorate, nor the market administration ever look in (on the market).”<sup>68</sup> In April 1946 another correspondent made similar complaints.<sup>69</sup> Neglected spaces attracted people on the margins of society, where they gathered to drink vodka, swear, fight and gamble; behaviour

which troubled polite society. The responses of Leningrad's municipal authorities to the problems created by beggars and vagrants after 1945 provide an opportunity to assess how national campaigns against "social marginals" were implemented at a local level.

Prior to 1948 there is no evidence of targeted clearance of disabled veterans from Leningrad's public spaces; a situation that challenges the chronological focus of Valaam rumours and myths. It is possible that disabled veterans living on the streets were amongst the 32,865 people in 1946 and 37,681 in 1947 forced to leave the city because they residence permits, but there is no indication that this represented a specific attack on vagrancy.<sup>70</sup> The June 1948 campaign against "anti-social parasitical elements", despite being directed primarily at rural populations, may have reduced speculation, begging and vagrancy in Leningrad. The surviving records of *kolkhoz* meetings in the Leningrad oblast, which punished unproductive community members, provide an indication of who fell foul of collective sentiment and why.<sup>71</sup> Demobilized and disabled veterans were occasionally amongst the individuals and families sanctioned for their behaviour. Ivan Aleksandrovich Blokhin, for example, a thirty-three year old demobilized veteran living on a collective farm in the Volkhovskii district worked just 47 labor days in 1948, compared to more than 300 in 1946 and 1947. From the winter of 1947 he substituted agricultural work with the production of small wooden craft items, which he sold at Leningrad's markets.<sup>72</sup> His forty-seven year old relative Ivan Fedorovich Blokhin found himself in a similar position. His release from the army in 1944, before mass demobilization began in June 1945, perhaps indicated that he was a war invalid. "Since October 1947 he (had) systematically and stubbornly avoided participation in the work of the *kolkhoz*." He concentrated instead on cultivating his private plot and selling potatoes, onions and milk in Leningrad's and Volkhov's markets.<sup>73</sup> A number of other excluded individuals also made regular journeys to Leningrad to sell produce



or milk.<sup>74</sup> The June 1948 legislation may have indirectly prevented veterans, war invalids and others making regular visits to Leningrad. Former Prisoners of War and individuals who had experienced German occupation were heavily represented amongst the “anti-social parasitical elements”, indicating the continued suspicion and hostility towards these groups.<sup>75</sup> Disabled veterans, however, were not the campaign’s primary targets.

Secret documents recently discovered in the archive of the Leningrad City Soviet provide evidence of organised operations against the destitute (*nishchi*) between March and June 1949. Places where the disabled congregated, such as shops, markets, churches, public baths, and cinemas were put under observation, and the Leningrad city militia was given the responsibility of conducting regular raids “to systematically execute the removal of invalids from the streets”.<sup>76</sup> On March 10, 1949, a special communication (*spetssoobshchenie*) forwarded to the Chairman of the Leningrad City Soviet by the Leningrad city and district militia detailed the results of an operation on March 5 and 6, 1949, to remove beggars from the streets. In two days 501 people, including 54 children, were detained. Of those arrested 320 were resident in Leningrad, 81 were residents of the Leningrad oblast, and 100 had arrived from other oblasts.<sup>77</sup> The minutes of a meeting convened on June 1, 1949, to discuss “the struggle with begging in the city of Leningrad” make reference to a further series of raids, which resulted in 406 people being detained in three days. Few were Leningraders.<sup>78</sup> Indeed in her report the head of the Leningrad Department of Social Security, T. M. Markelova, was at pains to stress that outsiders were responsible for the increase in vagrancy.<sup>79</sup> Between 1945 and 1950 Leningrad’s political elite frequently blamed social problems, such as criminality or the strain on medical services, on the arrival of outsiders.<sup>80</sup> In 1948 and the first half of 1949 the number of heavily disabled invalids and elderly citizens in Leningrad increased significantly. According to Markelova disabled and elderly arrivals

initially lived and registered with friends and relatives, but after a short period found themselves kicked out and at the mercy of social security organs. Approximately a third of the residents of Leningrad's invalids' homes (*doma invalidov*) had not lived in the city before the war. Indeed, one of the solutions to the problem suggested by Markelova was to strictly limit the number of residence permits issued to invalids and the elderly.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the language of “raids” and “systematic clearance” it would be incorrect to see these “operations” as purely coercive, and as confirmation of rumours of the disappearance of Leningrad's streets, albeit several years later than the collective memory suggested. After 1945 the militarization of official language, a process with its roots in the Russian Civil War, had become so routine that such rhetoric was just as easily applied to campaigns to ready buildings for winter, enable spring sowing or for inspections of hostels.<sup>82</sup> Operations to clear beggars from the streets, according to these documents, rarely resulted in the deportation of beggars or their placement in residential institutions. In fact the social security administration's involvement in operations was often to place beggars in the care of relatives or to provide additional material support.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, at the March 10, 1949, meeting one official, comrade Pchel'kin, appeared frustrated by the lack of repressive tools available to the social security department: “We are unable to employ repression against those begging. We have to call in their relatives for discussion. To liquidate beggars it is necessary to exile them from Leningrad, but we don't have the right to do that.”<sup>84</sup> When the department of social security had agreement to send beggars back to other regions it often lacked the resources to finance their relocation.<sup>85</sup> A number of delegates at the meeting blamed the problem on the liberal attitude of the police towards beggars, and the weakness of police work in general. According to Markelova even when they were dealing with

professional beggars, policemen routinely referred detained beggars to the social security organs for placement in residential care, even when they did not need it.<sup>86</sup>

If the operations against beggars in the spring 1949, and the discussions surrounding them, failed to solve Leningrad's problem with vagrants, the implementation of the July 1951 law in Leningrad was also unsatisfactory. Although the July 1951 law appears to have resulted in an active campaign against social marginals, the measures taken to eradicate and prevent begging in Leningrad were far from successful. A Leningrad City Soviet Executive Committee report dated December 30, 1952, evaluated the progress of attempts to deal with beggars. It accepted that begging had been far from eliminated, and that it continued on streets and on public transport, in shops, parks, bath-houses and other public spaces. Plans for further actions and ways of dealing with the problem were proposed.<sup>87</sup> Yet according to one historian in the first nine months of 1953 over 2,500 beggars were arrested in Leningrad.<sup>88</sup> Far from having disappeared in 1946 or 1947 Leningrad had a problem with beggars, vagrants and disabled veterans throughout the late Stalinist period and beyond. According to a USSR Ministry of Interior Report sent to Malenkov and Khrushchev on February 20, 1954, Leningrad's police frequently detained beggars, some repeatedly. There were 2,160 beggars who had been arrested more than five times, and over 100 people arrested more than thirty times.<sup>89</sup> Amongst Leningrad's most prominent vagrants were two disabled veterans, V.S. Cherepkhov and V.A. Alekseev both in their fifties, who routinely begged in order to fund their alcoholism. They had been arrested nineteen and sixteen times respectively in 1953, and twenty-six and twenty times between December 1953 and February 1954.<sup>90</sup>

On July 27, 1953, Mikhail Petrovich Saponenkov, a serving officer of the Soviet Army and a member of the Communist Party, wrote an incensed letter to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union; “I ask you to explain to me what can be done in order that in our city of Leningrad people don’t have to observe people asking for alms.” Saponenkov described regularly encountering beggars on Lebedev and Botkin streets, both close to the Military Medical Academy, as well as on trams and suburban trains. Amongst these was at least one disabled veteran, Alekseei Matveevich Brysov a fifty-five year old war invalid who had lost both arms and one eye.<sup>91</sup> The impression created by this letter bears a striking resemblance to an oft quoted letter sent to A. A. Zhdanov by a serving sergeant on July 23, 1947, which described a similar picture of Moscow and its public transport system awash with beggars.<sup>92</sup> If beggars, including disabled veterans, remained a prominent feature of Leningrad’s urban landscape as late as July 1953, the effectiveness of repeated attempts to eliminate or reduce vagrancy in the city should be questioned. Far from disappearing, as the rumours about the forced clearance of beggars indicated, social marginals continued to be attracted to Leningrad, remaining a firm presence in the post-war city.

The second feature of rumours and myths about a campaign against disabled veterans was the exile of disabled vagrants to the isolated and ancient monastery buildings of Valaam. The reality of the institutions established on Valaam in the wake of war, just as with the reality of street clearances, diverged significantly from the widespread rumours and myths. Although a residential home for the elderly and disabled was established on Valaam, the archipelago was not designated as a dumping ground for disabled veterans in the ways the urban myth implied.

Following the Soviet Union's recapture of the Valaam archipelago during the Soviet-Finnish war, the islands and their buildings, many of which were heavily damaged by bombing, were used for a number of purposes. In August 1940, for example, the Soviet navy established a school for boatswains (*botsmany*) on the island. An experimental school for ship's boys (*jungi*), the lowest pre-revolutionary rank of the Navy encompassing twelve to seventeen year olds, was later attached to this school.<sup>93</sup> After the war there appear to have been preliminary plans to turn former monastery buildings into a sanatorium for paper industry employees. On July 13, 1946, *Vechernyi Leningrad* reported that builders were working on preparing buildings for holiday makers, as well as the fantastical suggestion that a landing strip was being constructed to allow access to the island in bad weather and presumably when Lake Ladoga was frozen.<sup>94</sup> There is no indication that these ideas ever progressed beyond the planning stage. Archival material pinpoints the creation of a *dom invalidov* for the elderly and disabled on Valaam in 1950, rather than in 1946 or 1947 as oral evidence suggests. Documents preserved in the National Archive of the Republic of Karelia indicate that a *dom invalidov* was established by the Karelian-Finnish Council of Ministers on May 5, 1950.<sup>95</sup> In his memoirs Evgenii Kuznetsov, a tour guide who claims to have witnessed conditions in the Valaam *dom invalidov* and had personal contact with its residents, also makes reference to a law passed by the Supreme Soviet of the Karelian-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic in 1950.<sup>96</sup> Once established the *dom invalidov* came under the control of the Karelian-Finnish Ministry of Social Security, whose archive preserves fascinating evidence about residents' living conditions.<sup>97</sup>

The reality of the institution, and the functions it fulfilled, were very different from the rumours, myths and subsequent interpretation of historians. Thanks to newly discovered archival materials, examined here for the first time, it is possible to begin to piece together

the history of an institution, which has been distorted and manipulated by decades of rumour and myth-making. Rather than being created to isolate and segregate disabled veterans rounded up from the streets of Leningrad, and other major Soviet cities, the Valaam ‘colony’ was the product of the consolidation of seven smaller institutions scattered across Karelia. In total 775 patients and 177 employees were transferred from these institutions.<sup>98</sup> By September 1952 Valaam was home to 904 disabled patients and 530 members of staff.<sup>99</sup> According to Kuznetsov’s memoir throughout the 1960s the institution accommodated approximately 600 patients on Valaam’s main island, 80 psychiatric patients on a separate island, and a staff of doctors, nurses, cleaners, cooks and other support workers approaching 600 people.<sup>100</sup> The majority of patients were not disabled ex-servicemen, but rather mentally ill, disabled or elderly civilians. In 1947 the institutions from which the Valaam *dom invalidov* would later be formed contained just seventy-five disabled veterans.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, in September 1952 a recommendation was made that separate institutions were created on Valaam for the elderly, industrially injured, the blind, the congenitally disabled and war invalids, all offering specialized care. The proposed facilities for the war disabled were designed to accommodate just fifty veterans.<sup>102</sup>

The institution was not located within the Monastery’s main buildings, which had been heavily bombed in 1940 and required extensive reconstruction, but rather a building known as the “Big Hotel” (*Bol’shaia gostinitsa*) built in the mid-nineteenth century to accommodate visitors to the island and monastery, outside of the monastery’s formal territory. This building had been converted into a commercial hotel in the 1920s and 1930s for Finnish tourists. It also housed the Navy’s training schools for boatswains and ships’ boys.<sup>103</sup> By 1950, however, this building also required reconstruction. Walls had to be repaired, plastered and painted; window frames had to be repaired and re-glazed.<sup>104</sup> The

shortage of skilled construction workers meant that the majority of work was undertaken by disabled patients.<sup>105</sup>

Conditions for disabled and elderly patients/residents were every bit as bad as historians have speculated. Shortages of furniture, mattresses, blankets, pillows and sheets persisted until September 1952, and most probably beyond. Washing facilities, water-supply and heating systems were in disrepair, for want of parts and skilled specialists.<sup>106</sup> In March 1953 the Karelian Ministry of Social Security conducted an inspection of the facility, in response to a letter of complaint. The report listed a catalogue of problems. The building was cold and dirty. Hygiene was abysmal, no doubt hampered by the problems of water supply and washing facilities. Beds were infested with lice and cockroaches. An influenza epidemic prevented staff from washing patients for over two months. The resident doctor was hampered by shortages of basic medical supplies and equipment, and was able to provide only the most basic treatment. Mealtimes were particularly chaotic, with fights regularly breaking out between patients. The lack of adaptive equipment made eating a degrading experience. The shortage of cups meant that disabled residents were forced to slurp tea from shallow bowls. The report also recommended that Svistunov, the institution's director, was dismissed. His earlier reports of improving conditions had been revealed to be fabrications.<sup>107</sup> Nor did conditions improve quickly. As late as September 1960, ten years after its establishment, the Karelian Council of Ministers was still demanding an improvement in leadership, medical provision and living conditions. A month earlier residents had been hit by a mass outbreak of food poisoning, attributed to the unsanitary condition of the kitchen block.<sup>108</sup>

Supplying an island located in Europe's largest lake, cut off from the mainland by ice for five months of the year, was very difficult. Attempts to grow grain, vegetables and fruit, and to fish met with only limited success.<sup>109</sup> Most of Valaam's food supplies had to be brought in. But incompetent planning meant that the *dom invalidov*'s warehouse and shop often contained little more than rye flour, processed fat and sugar. Vodka, however, was always available. It was probably the only thing that made life bearable for residents and staff, and may have even been used as a means of controlling residents' disruptive behaviour.<sup>110</sup> In his memoirs Evgenii Kuznetsov recalls purchasing beer and vodka for invalids he encountered on the island.<sup>111</sup>

Valaam's isolation also made obtaining equipment and recruiting medical staff difficult. Institutional tensions aggravated this situation. The Karelian Ministry of Social Security blamed the lack of medical facilities on the Karelian Ministry of Health's repeated failure to send doctors, nurses and equipment.<sup>112</sup> For its part the Ministry of Health seemed baffled by the entire Valaam project. As Zhuralev, the Karelian Minister of Health, argued in September 1953: "When the decision was taken to organize a hospital (sic) on this island, the reason for this was not clear to us." He was not concerned about Valaam's vulnerable residents. Rather, Zhuralev was perturbed that medical facilities were being organized for unproductive disabled citizens whilst ordinary workers on the mainland went without adequate provision. He argued that the money would have been better spent on improving the facilities of the nearest hospital in Sortavalo.<sup>113</sup> Clearly the organization on Valaam of a *dom invalidov* for disabled and elderly citizens from across Karelia was neither entirely logical, nor did it create acceptable conditions for patients. Although there was much that was unpleasant, indeed reprehensible, about the treatment of Valaam's residents, the island



was not initially intended to house thousands of impoverished war invalids cleared from urban public spaces across the Soviet Union.

Of course it is possible that between its establishment in 1950 and closure in 1984 the Valaam *dom invalidov* underwent many changes. The number of residents may have swelled over time. Disabled veterans who fell foul of periodic campaigns against beggars and other social marginals, and had no families or relatives with whom they could be placed, may indeed have been removed from sight and housed in isolated locations like Valaam. Alternatively, itinerant disabled veterans lacking personal networks or support structures may over time have found their way to Valaam. The spiritual calm, tranquillity and isolation of Valaam, which have attracted monks and pilgrims to Valaam throughout the ages, may have appealed to individuals cruelly shunned by society and wishing to escape the gaze of shocked onlookers. Other institutions across the Soviet Union may have transferred troublesome mutilated or disfigured veterans without ties or contacts to Valaam. However, the number of disabled veterans resident on Valaam may have been much lower than suggested in some versions of the myth. A total of fifty-four names are inscribed on the monument to disabled Great Patriotic War veterans buried on the island, dedicated by Patriarch Kirill on July 10, 2011. According to one report the decision to erect a monument was a response to the accidental discovery of approximately 200 personal files of residents of *dom invalidov*.<sup>114</sup> Detailed analysis of the stories of Valaam's disabled veterans, their backgrounds and how they came to be on the island, can only be made if and when these files become available to researchers.

On a purely factual level the urban myth of the forced clearance of disabled veterans from Leningrad and their exile to Valaam turns out to be highly questionable. The rumours

had only the weakest foundation in reality; a *dom invalidov* housing a relatively small number of disabled was established on Valaam and there were attempts to remove Leningrad's beggars from urban spaces. However, disabled veterans did not disappear en masse from Leningrad's streets, nor were they systematically rounded up and exiled to Valaam. Although there is much about the myth that is inaccurate, misleading and even 'false', the myth itself reveals a different historical truth, providing information about the mentalities of those individuals who believed it and kept it alive through its retelling. Furthermore, the points of disparity between myth and reality reveal important features about the way in which Leningraders made sense of the post-war world, both at the time and subsequently. Why then did individuals and collectives believe that beggarly war invalids were systematically cleared from urban areas and deported to isolated locations? What was it about the Valaam myth that made it plausible and ensured its longevity?

At its most basic level the myth has been believed because it offers an appealing story, that in the context of a wider understanding of Stalinism makes sense. The story of multiple amputees and disfigured being rounded up and left to live out the rest of their lives in isolated institutions encapsulates the callousness of the Soviet state towards its most vulnerable citizens. If the way a society treats former soldiers, particularly the disabled, is a barometer of its humanity and compassion, then here is proof of how the Soviet Union, hardened by the experience of war, neglected the very citizens it publicly celebrated as heroes.<sup>115</sup> The Valaam myth has served as a convenient short-hand for the exclusion of Great Patriotic war invalids and the additional barriers they faced to adjusting to post-war civilian life compared to able-bodied veterans, issues which have dominated western historiography.<sup>116</sup>

For Soviet citizens it was plausible that the regime was capable of a mass campaign to remove “socially marginal” groups such as disabled veterans off the street almost overnight. Clearly, had it been deemed a sufficiently high priority the regime and its security apparatus was capable of such an operation. By 1945 the state had amassed a wealth of experience in deporting large numbers of people across great distances in short periods of time. As Norman Naimark writes Soviet officials had, “learned lessons about how to conduct military-like operations against their own people, using surprise and speed as their most valuable weapons to uproot masses of unsuspecting citizens.”<sup>117</sup> When deemed necessary whole nationalities, feared as socially and politically unreliable elements in the event of war, could be forcibly cleared from frontier regions. In 1937 Koreans became the victims of the first ‘total’ forced removal of a national group within the Soviet Union.<sup>118</sup> Between 1939 and 1941 a number of national groups, most notably in Poland and the Baltic States, experienced forced deportations. Finns, Greeks, Romanians, Tartars and Germans were all forcibly cleared from border regions as a preventative measure. In 1943 and 1944 punitive operations to deport entire nationalities in the North Caucasuses and Crimea targeted Crimean Tartars, Karachais, Balkars, Kalmyks, Ingushetians and Chechens.<sup>119</sup> Within a few days approximately 500,000 Chechens and Ingush were rounded up in trucks and deported in sealed trains to Kazakhstan and Kirghizia.<sup>120</sup> Another of the post-war period’s most enduring rumours and myths, which in many ways parallels the Valaam myth, was the “legend of day X”, a supposed day when millions of Jews across the Soviet Union were to be rounded up and “voluntarily deported”.<sup>121</sup> If the regime was able to remove entire nations it was capable of clearing vagrants and beggars from its most heavily policed cities.

The pinpointing of the disappearance of disabled veterans from Soviet cities in 1946 or 1947, a common feature of many retellings of the Valaam myth, is significant. These

years have often been treated as a watershed by historians; an era of post-war transition and negotiation compressed into a few short years. Several historians place the point when the regime reasserted control over virtually all areas of Soviet politics, economy and society, after a period of limited wartime relaxation, in 1947 or 1948.<sup>122</sup> According to one Russian historian this moment of transition was so strong that 1947 marked the beginning of a new epoch; the real beginning of the 1950s.<sup>123</sup> By late 1947 mass demobilization was all but complete. Throughout 1947 and 1948 much of the legislation securing benefits and enhanced status for war invalids and demobilized veterans, passed between 1945 and 1947, was dismantled.<sup>124</sup> A major currency reform and abolition of rationing was undertaken in December 1947. The normalisation of Soviet trade which accompanied these policy shifts led to a decline in the fortune of post-war black-markets and private trade.<sup>125</sup> Since vagrant disabled veterans frequently earned their living from the second economy shifts in post-war trade and consumption may have contributed to the war disabled's declining visibility in Soviet cities.<sup>126</sup> Against the backdrop of attempts to re-impose Stalinist control between 1946 and 1948 the Valaam myth made sense, and perhaps indicates the significance of these years in popular memory as a moment of post-war transition.

There were other features of the Valaam myth that resonated with Russian and Soviet citizens. Although Valaam was not used as a special settlement for disabled veterans, both the late Imperial and Soviet states exploited other isolated islands as sites for imprisoning criminals, political prisoners and socially marginal elements. Sakhalin, late imperial Russia's and arguably the world's notorious penal settlement, served as a distant location for exiling criminals and vagrants in much the same way as Britain and France used Australia and Devil's Island.<sup>127</sup> The story of the forced exile of disabled veterans to "special colonies" in the far north like Valaam bears striking parallels with the development in the 1920s of the

Solovetskii camps of special significance [SLON] (*Solovetskii lageriia osobogo naznacheniia*) on the Solovetskii archipelago, situated in the White Sea in Russia's north. The Solovetskii islands are often remembered as the "first camp of the Gulag". It was here that many of the mechanisms and rules of the Gulag were devised and perfected. Political prisoners, common criminals, hooligans, street children and prostitutes found themselves herded into a concentration camp located in the dilapidated buildings of an ancient cathedral.<sup>128</sup> Rumours about Valaam may well have been informed by an awareness of past developments at both Solovetskii and Sakhalin.

While the Valaam myth was misleading, the notion that socially marginal elements could be abandoned on an isolated island was not entirely fantastical. Similar horrors had occurred in the past. In May 1933 nearly ten thousand "déclassé and socially harmful elements", deported mainly from Moscow and Leningrad, were dumped on Nazino, an island in the middle of the River Ob in Western Siberia. Nazino was approximately three kilometres long and between 500 and 600 metres wide, and situated nearly 800 kilometres north of Tomsk. The island contained little or no shelter, and no source of food. The authorities failed to provide equipment and food supplies, apart from twenty tons of flour dumped on the opposite river bank. The situation quickly descended into chaos, as the starving deportees died, attempted to escape, or in extreme cases resorted to cannibalism. The island quickly gained the nick-name "Cannibal Island".<sup>129</sup> Thanks to a commission of inquiry the Nazino tragedy was remarkably well documented. Investigations revealed that within six weeks of the first 6,000 deportees being left on the island on May 18, 1,500 to 2,000 had died, and several hundred more had escaped.<sup>130</sup> The circumstances in which individuals were rounded up and deported, as well as the groups targeted, were also established. The majority of Nazino deportees appear to have been arrested, as part of a vast

operation to “purify” Moscow and Leningrad between April, 27 and 29, 1933 in preparation for the May 1 Holiday.<sup>131</sup> Police patrols cleared large numbers of “socially harmful elements” from train stations, markets and hospices.<sup>132</sup> The homeless, vagrants, the disabled, the blind and the elderly were all particular targets of the impulse to cleanse Soviet urban spaces of polluting individuals. However, peasants escaping famine and dekulakization, as well as innocent urbanites caught without their passport could find themselves victims of the elastic definitions of what constituted “socially harmful elements”.<sup>133</sup> The reality that the Stalinist state had previously cleared undesirable elements from urban spaces and exiled them to isolated islands made the Valaam myth all the more believable. Revelations such as the Nazino tragedy, circulating after *glasnost*, may have informed and merged with rumours and myths about Valaam.

The Valaam myth was made all the more plausible by the everyday treatment of war invalids closer to home, and in post-war Leningrad in particular. Although less dramatic than the shunting off of socially undesirable elements to distant islands, disabled veterans routinely faced callous treatment at the hands of officials, bureaucrats as well as ordinary citizens. Disabled veterans did not have to be exiled to Valaam to be marginalized or excluded. Political speeches, official legislation and propaganda campaigns all promoted the notion that war invalids were amongst the best protected and most respected of Soviet citizens, surrounded by the “care and attention” of the party, state and wider society.<sup>134</sup> Yet, the disparity between official pronouncements and reality struck many individuals. In a letter intercepted by Leningrad’s military censor one war invalid expressed his feeling of being unwanted:

“You hear by radio (that everything) is simply splendid, you think that everyone is pleased to see you, but as you begin (to settle in) you aren’t

needed by anyone... it's all just agitation, in fact there isn't anything; in general they are just blowing smoke in your eyes.”<sup>135</sup>

I have written elsewhere about the manner in which Leningrad's disabled veterans were pushed aside by heartless officials and by wider society. The unfeeling and unthinking attitudes of medical examination boards, social security officials and prosthetics technicians added to war invalids' sense of exclusion.<sup>136</sup> Disabled veterans' consciousness of their superfluity in a post-war world for which they had sacrificed their health and bodies was particularly poignant.<sup>137</sup> As one war invalid living in the village of Olenino in the Luzhskii district of the Leningrad oblast complained; “For what did we fight and suffer? We came home, and they look upon us like they would a dog.”<sup>138</sup>

More important, however, was the care that disabled veterans encountered in medical and residential institutions in and around Leningrad. The conditions of *dom invalidov* were reminiscent of those on Valaam. Horrible living conditions were by no means untypical. As Edele writes; “the overwhelming impression one gets from reading archival sources on these institutions is one of utter misery and despair.”<sup>139</sup> In January 1946 a conference of the directors of these institutions met to discuss the heartless treatment of disabled veterans in their care. *Doma invalidov* were dirty, cold, dark, and in urgent need of repair.<sup>140</sup> Bedding and clothing were rarely washed or changed. There were shortages of the most basic medical supplies, such as iodine and painkillers. Few had sufficient staff to care adequately for residents.<sup>141</sup> Soboleva, head of the Leningrad oblast Social Security administration, was incensed at conditions:

“People don't live in human conditions, but in cattle-like (*skotskii*) conditions; and everyone an invalid of the Patriotic War. I assure you comrades that even in the

most difficult times of the blockade troops living dugouts on the Leningrad front didn't live in such conditions as they now live, since they became invalids.”<sup>142</sup>

There were also allegations that the direction of some of these homes has been dismissed and prosecuted for embezzling funds intended for residents.<sup>143</sup> The attitude of staff towards people in their care was shocking. War invalids were treated with suspicion and as little better than thieves, rather than as heroes who had spilt their blood defending the nation. Soboleva and other delegates repeatedly reminded directors of their responsibility towards “living people” in their care.<sup>144</sup>

Conditions were little better in Leningrad's central hospital for Great Patriotic War invalids, established by a *Sovnarkom* resolution on July 20, 1946.<sup>145</sup> In August 1946 the local press celebrated the hospital's imminent opening. The facility was envisaged as one of the largest institutions devoted to the care and treatment of disabled veterans in the Soviet Union. It was to boast the latest Soviet technology, and to have brand new surgical orthopaedic, neurosurgical, maxillofacial and tubercular wards.<sup>146</sup> The hospital was located at Fontanka №.36, a grand neo-classical building in the heart of the city a few hundred metres from the Anchikov most' and Nevskii Prospect.<sup>147</sup> Rather than providing space for first-rate medical care the building was in a state of disrepair. In mid October 1946, six weeks after the building had been transferred to the hospital, its new director Nikolai Shatalov submitted an angry report to Professor Mashanskii, head of Leningrad's health department. Shatalov described the building's condition as “catastrophic”. The roof was so badly damaged that rainwater was leaking through to the ground floor. Only half of the windows were glazed. Shortages of plywood meant that unglazed windows weren't boarded up. The building's heating and plumbing systems had not been repaired. The lack of running water was a serious problem for a building intended to have surgical wards and where hygiene should have been a



priority.<sup>148</sup> Despite Shatalov's demands for immediate improvements the hospital was not fully operational for months.<sup>149</sup> One surviving patient and war invalid painted a depressing picture of care in the hospital. "Twenty to thirty people lay in the ward. Because of the lack of appropriate, effective and modern medicines for the treatment of tuberculosis young war participants (*uchastniki voiny*) died like flies." He was struck by his isolation, while being located in the very centre of Leningrad. "I looked with envy out of the hospital window at the happy people boating, while people like me, being ill, had neither chance of recovery, nor money, nor necessary medicine and food."<sup>150</sup> If disabled veterans could be so callously neglected in Leningrad, a city at the heart of the Soviet medical establishment, was it not plausible in Leningrad's collective imagination for the state to be capable of exiling disabled beggars to Valaam?

However, there may have been more prosaic and practical explanations for the disappearance of disabled veterans from public space, which the popular myth failed to account for. First, the war disabled, particularly the multiple amputees upon whom the Valaam myth concentrates, paid an enormous physical and mental price for victory. The life expectancy of heavily disabled veterans eking out a living amongst semi-criminal elements on the streets was limited. Many disabled veterans disappeared simply because they had died. Secondly, over time disability may have become less visible. Prosthetic limbs served, at least superficially, to hide dismemberment, in effect making the disabled disappear. Soviet prostheses, which were frequently poorly designed and manufactured, as well as heavy and uncomfortable, may not have been intended primarily to be a direct replacement for functioning limbs. Complaints about their quality were frequently printed in the national and Leningrad press.<sup>151</sup> As Seth Koven writes; "Prostheses were intended to make it possible for those who wore them and those who saw them to forget the trauma of amputation."<sup>152</sup>

Prosthetics suppressed the memories of war prompted by empty sleeves, eye patches or crutches, and protected late Stalinist society's aesthetic sensibilities. The retreat of post-war society into a cosy world of rubber plants, pink-lampshades, waxed parquet floors and net curtains, as Vera Dunham has argued, left little room for deformed and mutilated bodies.<sup>153</sup> However, in the light of repeated complaints about the fit, balance and comfort of artificial limbs, as well as persistent delays in their supply, it is unlikely that their provision was ever universal, especially amongst individuals on the edges of society.<sup>154</sup> Third, disabled veterans reduced to begging on the streets were not necessarily trapped on an inevitable downwards spiral. Some veterans may have found themselves welcomed into homes and domestic settings, spaces where a degree of healing and post-war recovery took place. Given the post-war shortage of men, a genuine post-war demographic crisis, many women formed relationships with disabled veterans offering an opportunity for reintegration into society. Popular fiction, as Anna Krylova has demonstrated, repeatedly disseminated images of women welcoming home mutilated and traumatized men, and encouraged women to become 'social therapists of male souls'.<sup>155</sup> Some women may indeed have offered homes to disabled veterans reduced to poverty. Yet the impulse may not always have been altruistic. There is evidence that some women deliberately married disabled veterans to claim the hand-outs they were officially entitled to.<sup>156</sup> Finally, and perhaps most importantly, disabled veterans "disappeared" from the social margins, not because of the organised actions of the state, but because they disappeared from the popular consciousness, as ordinary people stopped noticing them.

One of the most appealing aspects of the Valaam myth was that it offered a reassuring explanation for the disappearance of the war disabled. The marginalization of war invalids was the result of the actions of the totalitarian state. This narrative elided the messy

complexities of the treatment of the war disabled in post-war Leningrad and the Soviet Union. The myth that a repressive and uncaring state cleared the streets of disabled ex-servicemen distanced ordinary Leningraders from responsibility for the war disabled's post-war plight. Post-war Leningrad was a tough and unrelenting place, where compassion was all too often at a premium. The weak and vulnerable were all too often pushed aside, sometimes literally, by a society struggling to recreate even the most basic semblance of normality. Post-war propaganda frequently encouraged Soviet citizens to put the war behind them, and concentrate upon the future. Believing that the war's wounds had been healed, at least in the short term, required a determination to close ones eyes to the unpleasant legacies of war; bombsites, shortages and mass graves. In this context, disabled veterans were often an uncomfortable reminder of aspects of the war that Leningraders were desperately trying to forget. Rather than being cleared from the streets because they provoked difficult memories, Soviet citizens may simply have stopped noticing or paying attention to the war disabled.

When I began researching rumours and myths about Valaam I had hoped to uncover evidence that would confirm the stories that oral history respondents told about a campaign against disabled veterans. My intention was never to debunk myths and memories which capture the plight of disabled veterans marginalized by a callous state. There is no evidence, although it possible that the opening of closed archives might prompt a further re-evaluation, of a targeted campaign against disabled veterans, or that Valaam was the central dumping ground for victims of such a campaign. Even though these stories turn out to be a "false rumour" they provide a lens through which to explore the mentalities of those people who believed and transmitted the rumour. Given the Stalinist state's history of the forced clearance of socially marginal groups, the use of islands as punitive institutions, and the generally callous post-war treatment of war invalids these rumours were entirely plausible,

and gradually solidified into a widely accepted urban myth. Yet the wider truths revealed by an examination of the Valaam myth turn out to be far more illuminating than the details of the myths themselves. As well as revealing something about the plight of Leningrad's veterans, the Valaam myth reveals something about the function of myth in Soviet society. Myth was not simply a popular space in which seditious sentiments could be expressed, but also a way of making sense of the world in a society where the flow of information was highly regulated. Although there is an expanding literature exploring the role of myth in Soviet society, more work remains to be done deconstructing myths such as that of Valaam. It is through careful analysis of these myths, even when they bear limited resemblance to reality, that historians have one of their best opportunities for exploring how Soviet citizens made sense of their society, both at the time and subsequently.

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<sup>1</sup> Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York, 1994), 98; Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone. Death and Memory in Russia* (London, 2001), 305; idem, *Ivan's War. The Red Army 1939-45* (London, 2005), 314; Geoffrey Hosking, *Rulers and Victims. The Russians in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge MA., 2006), 239; Marcus Broekmeyer, *Stalin, the Russians and their War, 1941-1945*, trans. Rosalind Buck (Madison, 2004), 226; Sarah D. Phillips, "'There are No Invalids in the USSR!' A Missing Soviet Chapter in the New Disability History', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2009).

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<sup>2</sup> A.Z. Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi 1945-1982 gody* (St. Petersburg, 2005), 105; “Kogda Peterburg byl Leningradom ‘Drugaia istoriia’,” *Argumenty i fakty. Peterburg*, No.18 (May 2000): 12; Danil Granin, “Stalinizmy – Net!” *Rodina*, No.3 (2009), 48-50 (50); Anna Reid, *Leningrad. Tragedy of a City Under Siege, 1941-44* (London, 2011), 407.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Dale, “Re-adjusting to Life After War: The Demobilization of Red Army Veterans in Leningrad and the Leningrad Region, 1944-1950” (Ph.D. diss., Queen Mary, University of London, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Amongst the most important contributions are Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War. Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments 1945-1957*, trans. Hugh Ragsdale (London, 1998), idem, *Poslevoennoe Sovetskoe Obschestvo: Politika i povsednevnost’, 1945-1953* (Moscow, 2000), and E. Iu. Zubkova et. al. eds., *Sovetskaia zhizn’, 1945-1953* (Moscow, 2003), 308-325; Elena Seniavakaia, *Frontovoe Pokolenie, 1941-1945: Istoriko-psikhologicheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow, 1995); Beate Fiesler, *Die Invaliden des ‘Grossen Vaterländischen Krieges’ der Sowjetunion: Eine politische Sozialgeschichte 1941-1991* (Bochum, 2003), idem., ‘The Bitter Legacy of the ‘Great Patriotic War’: Red Army Disabled Soldiers under Late Stalinism’ in *Late Stalinist Russia. Society between reconstruction and reinvention*, ed. Juliane Füst (London, 2006), 46-61, idem., ‘The Soviet Union’s “Great Patriotic War” Invalids: The Poverty of a New Status Group’, *Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung*, Vol. 20, No. 5 (2010), *Veterans and War Victims in Eastern Europe during the 20th Century. A Comparison*, 34-49; Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War. A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941-1991* (Oxford, 2008), 81-101.

<sup>5</sup> Beate Fieseler, “‘La Protection Social Totale’ Les hospices pour grands mutilés de guerre dans l’Union soviétique des années 1940’, *Cahiers du Monde russe*, Vol. 49, No. 2-3 (April - September 2008), 419-440 (438-439); Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, 62-3, 93-94.

<sup>6</sup> Mary M. Leder, *My Life in Stalinist Russia. An American Looks Back*, ed. Laurie Bernstein (Bloomington, 2001), 279.

<sup>7</sup> Edele makes a similar point suggesting that a shared collective memory had solidified by the 1990s. Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, 94.

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- <sup>8</sup> A. Solzhenitsyn, Arkhipelag *GULag, 1918-1956. Opyt khudozhestvennogo issledovaniia*, V. VI. VII (Paris, 1975), 390; Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago. 1918-1956. An Experiment in Literary Investigation*. V-VII, trans. H.T. Willetts (London, 1978), 372.
- <sup>9</sup> Yuri Nagibin, "Terpenie", *Novyi Mir*, No. 2 (1982), 25-53; Vera Dunham, "Images of the Disabled, Especially the War Wounded in Soviet Literature," in *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past Present, Theory and Practice*, ed. William O. McCagg and Lewis Siegelbaum (Pittsburgh, 1989), 151-64 (160-63).
- <sup>10</sup> Valerii Fefelov, *V SSSR invalidov net!* (London, 1986), 54-55.
- <sup>11</sup> Dunham, "Images of the Disabled", 161.
- <sup>12</sup> Evgenii Kuznetsov, *Valaamskaia tetrad'* (St. Petersburg, 2004)
- <sup>13</sup> Iurii Kublanovskii, 'Razorenie Valaama', *Russkaia Mysl' – La Pensee Russe*, April 27, 1984, 7. Also quoted in Fefelov, *V SSSR invalidov net!* 56.
- <sup>14</sup> "Avtografy voyny. Litsy skorbi i muzhestva," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, May 25, 1988, 13. Broekmeyer refers to this portrait as a photograph, see Broekmeyer, *Stalin, the Russians and their War*, 226.
- <sup>15</sup> Grigorii B. Kravchik, *Dornenwege: Ein Leben unter Stalin* (Bremen, 1989), 93-94, also quoted in Fieseler, "La Protection Social Totale", 439.
- <sup>16</sup> For a detailed examination of the image of Valaam throughout its history see Kati Parppei, "The Oldest One". *The Formation of the Historiographical Image of the Valaam Monastery* (Leiden, 2011).
- <sup>17</sup> John H. Lind, "Sources and Pseudo-Sources on the Foundation of the Valamo Monastery," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (June 1986), 115-133; idem, "The politico-religious landscape of medieval Karelia", *Fennia*, Vol. 182, No. 1 (2004), 3-11 (7); Kati Parppei, "Pagans of Darkness, Cruel Lutherans. Images of religious 'others' in the historical accounts concerning the Russian Orthodox Valaam monastery," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (June 2010), 135-155 (137).
- <sup>18</sup> Parppei, "Pagans of Darkness," 139; O.A. Iarovoi and I.A. Smirnova, *Valaamskie Ostrova. Istoriia v pamiatnikakh i landshaftakh. Spravochnik-putevoditel'* (Petrozavodsk, 2009).

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- <sup>19</sup> Amongst the famous Valaam landscapes are Ivan Shishkin: *Vid na ostrove Valaame* (1858); *Vid na ostrove Valaame. Kukko* (1859-60), *Peizazh s okhotnikom. Ostrov Valaam* (1867), Feodor Vasileyev, *Near a Church Valaam* (1867), *On Valaam Rocks* (1867), *On the Island. Valaam* (1869); Arkhip Kuindzki, *On a Valaam Island* (1873).
- <sup>20</sup> Richard Wortman, "Rule by Sentiment: Alexander II's Journeys Through the Russian Empire," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 3 (June, 1990), 745–771 (750, 759-60)
- <sup>21</sup> Alexandre Dumas, *Adventures in Czarist Russia*, trans. and ed. A.E. Murch (London, 1960), 109-126 (118).
- <sup>22</sup> Iarovoi and Smirnova, *Valaamskie Ostrova*, 41
- <sup>23</sup> On the development of Soviet tourism more generally see Anne E. Gorsuch, "'There's No Place like Home': Soviet Tourism in Late Stalinism," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (December 2003), 760-785.
- <sup>24</sup> Kuznetsov, *Valaamskaia tetrad'*, 6-7, 70
- <sup>25</sup> A number of sources about the presence of disabled veterans on Valaam come from tourists, or people involved in tourism, who were confronted and shocked by the dissonance between the sight of heavily disabled veterans, in place known for its natural beauty. Kuznetsov, *Valaamskaia tetrad'*, Kravchik, *Dornenwege*, 93-94. Fieseler also makes this point in see, "'La Protection Social Totale'", 439.
- <sup>26</sup> Amongst Putin's visits to Valaam include those on July 9, 2009  
<http://premier.gov.ru/eng/visits/ru/6116/events/4574/> (last accessed April 28, 2012 16.30), August 14, 2011  
<http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/16203/> (last accessed April 28, 2012 16.30) and August 6, 2012  
<http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/4265> (last accessed 05 October 2012 12.00).
- <sup>27</sup> Parppei, "Pagans of Darkness," 136-137; Lind, "Sources and Pseudo-Sources", 115-116.
- <sup>28</sup> Parppei, "Pagans of Darkness," 138-140.
- <sup>29</sup> Parppei, "Pagans of Darkness," 144-145.
- <sup>30</sup> Alex Inkles and Raymond Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen. Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society* (New York, 1968), 56, 175-77.
- <sup>31</sup> Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror. Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (London, 1968), 569.

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<sup>32</sup> J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges. The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-38* (Cambridge, 1985), 5, 213. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (Oxford, 1994); Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (Oxford, 1994), Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia. Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1991* (Cambridge, 1997), Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1999).

<sup>33</sup> For a fuller survey of the historiography of Soviet rumours see Timothy Johnston, "Subversive Tales? War rumours in the Soviet Union 1945-1947," in *Late Stalinist Russia*, ed. Fürst, 62-78 and Timothy Johnston, *Being Soviet. Identity, Rumour and Everyday Life under Stalin. 1939 – 1953* (Oxford, 2011), xxxiv-xl.

<sup>34</sup> Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia*, 114.

<sup>35</sup> Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin*, 66.

<sup>36</sup> Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789. Rural Panic in Revolutionary France* (New York, 1973); Bronisław Baczko, *Ending the Terror: The French Revolution after Robespierre*, trans. Michel Petheram (Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>37</sup> Baczko, *Ending the Terror*, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and Event," in Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories. Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, 1991), 1-26.

<sup>39</sup> A. Z. Vakser, "Nastroeniia Leningradtsev poslevoennogo vremeni. 1945-1953 gody," *Nestor*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2001), 303-26 (325-26).

<sup>40</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, 7, 39.

<sup>41</sup> Amongst works which address the treatment of beggars and vagrants in this period are Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Social parasites. How tramps, idle youth, and busy entrepreneurs impeded the Soviet march to communism," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, Vol. 47, No. 1-2 (June 2006), 377-408 (377); Elena Zubkova, 'S protianutoi rukoi. Nishchie i nishchenstv v poslevoennom SSSR', *Cahiers du Monde russe*, Vol. 49, No. 2-3 (April - September 2008), pp.441-474; Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, 81-101, Iu. Zubkova and T. Iu. Zhukova, eds., *Na "kraiu" sovetskogo obshchestva. Sotial'nye marginally kak ob'ekt gosudarstvennoi politiki. 1945-1960-e gg.*, (Moscow,



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2010); Hubertus Jahn, *Armes Russland: Bettler Und Notleidende in Der Russischen Geschichte Vom Mittelalter Bis in Die Gegenwart* (Paderborn, 2010), 135-147. On attempts to clear these kinds of social group from post-blockade Leningrad see Siobhan Peeling, "'Out of Place' in the Postwar City: Practices, Experiences and Representations of Displacement during the Resettlement of Leningrad at the end of the Blockade" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nottingham, 2010), 185-244, and idem, 'Dirt, Disease and Disorder: Population Re-Placement in Postwar Leningrad and the 'Danger' of Social Contamination', in *Warlands. Population Resettlement and State reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands, 1945-50*, eds. Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron (Basingstoke, 2009), 117-139.

<sup>42</sup> Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, "Social Misfits: Veterans and Soldiers' Families in Servile Russia," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1995), 215-235; Andrew A. Gentes, "Vagabondage and Siberia. Disciplinary Modernism in Tsarist Russia", in *Cast Out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspectives*, ed. A.L. Beier and Paul Ocobock (Athens, OH., 2008), 184-208.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew A. Gentes, "'Completely Useless': Exiling the Disabled to Tsarist Siberia," *Sibirica*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer 2011), 26-49.

<sup>44</sup> On the dislocation suffered by refugees see Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking. Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington, 1999); J. Sanborn, "Unsettling the Empire: Violence Migration and Social Disaster in Russia during World War I," *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (June 2005), 290-324.

<sup>45</sup> Alan M. Ball, *And Now My Soul is Hardened. Abandoned Children in Soviet Russia, 1918-1930* (Berkeley, 1994); Alan Ball, "The Roots of Besprizornost' in Soviet Russia's First Decade," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Summer 1992), 247-270; Margaret K. Stolee, "Homeless children in the USSR, 1917-1953," *Soviet Studies*, Vol.40, No.1 (January 1998), 64-83. On homeless children in the late Stalinist period see, Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation. Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford, 2010), pp.34-41

<sup>46</sup> Fitzpatrick, "Social parasites," 378-80.

<sup>47</sup> On this wider aesthetic project see Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, aesthetic dictatorship, and beyond*, trans. by Charles Rougle (Princeton, 1992); David Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca, 2003), 11; Katerina Clark, *Moscow, The Fourth Rome. Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941* (Cambridge MA., 2011), 105-135.

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<sup>48</sup> Paul M. Hagenloh, “‘Socially Harmful Elements’ and the Great Terror,” in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London, 2000), 286-308; David R. Shearer, “Social Disorder, Mass Repression, and the NKVD during the 1930s,” *Cahiers du Monde russe*, Vol. 47. No. 2-4 (April – December 2001), 505-34 and David R. Shearer, *Policing Stalin’s Socialism. Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924-1953* (New Haven, 2009), 181-218.

<sup>49</sup> Hagenloh, “‘Socially Harmful Elements’”.

<sup>50</sup> Shearer, *Policing Stalin’s Socialism*, 209; Shearer, “Social Disorder”, 524.

<sup>51</sup> Fitzpatrick, “Social parasites,” 380.

<sup>52</sup> V. F. Zima, *Golod v SSSR. 1946-1947 godov: Proiskhozhdenie i posledstviia* (Moscow, 1996), 217; Zubkova and Zhukova, eds., *Na “kraiu” sovetskogo obshchestva*, 23.

<sup>53</sup> Zima, *Golod v SSSR*, 217.

<sup>54</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, 93, see also 62.

<sup>55</sup> Zubkova and Zhukova eds., *Na “kraiu” sovetskogo obshchestva*, 23; Beate Fieseler, “‘Nishche pobediteli’: invalidy Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny v Sovetskom Soiuze,” *Neprikosnovennnyi zapas*, No. 40-41 (2/3) (2005), 290-297 (290). The French journalist Michel Gordey, for example, recalled seeing many disabled veterans in railway waiting rooms in Moscow in the early 1950s. Micehl Gordey, *Visa to Moscow*, trans. K. Woods (London, 1952), 31.

<sup>56</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, 62.

<sup>57</sup> Zima, *Golod v SSSR*, 217.

<sup>58</sup> Zubkova and Zhukova, eds., *Na “kraiu” sovetskogo obshchestva*, 23.

<sup>59</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, 94; Peeling, “‘Out of Place’,” 236, Fieseler, “‘La Protection Sociale Totale’,” 438.

<sup>60</sup> I. V. Govorov, *Prestupnost’ i bor’ba s nei v poslevonnom Leningrade (1945-1955): opyt istoricheskogo analiza* (St. Petersburg, 2004), 64-68.

<sup>61</sup> For the most detailed account of Khrushchev’s 1948 law see Jean Lévesque, “Exile and Discipline: the June 1948 Campaign Against Collective Farm Shirkers,” *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European*

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*Studies*, Number 1708 (September 2006). See also Fitzpatrick, "Social parasites," 380-381; Zima, *Golod v SSSR*, 181 and Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War. Hopes, Illusions and Disappointment, 1945-1957*, trans. Hugh Ragsdale (Armonk, 1998), 66-67.

<sup>62</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. R-7523, op. 85, d. 365, l. 1. Reprinted in Zubkova and Zhukova, eds., *Na "krai" sovetskogo obshchestva*, 61. See also Fitzpatrick, "Social parasites," 381.

<sup>63</sup> GARF, f. R-5446, op. 81b, d. 9292, l. 43. Reprinted in Zubkova and Zhukova, eds., *Na "krai" sovetskogo obshchestva*. 59. See also discussion of this document 23-24.

<sup>64</sup> *Na "krai" sovetskogo obshchestva*, 38.

<sup>65</sup> Fitzpatrick, "Social parasites," 397

<sup>66</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii (RGANI) f. 5, op. 30, d. 78, ll. 41-46. Reprinted in Zubkova and Zhukova, eds., *Na "krai" sovetskogo obshchestva*, 117-120 (117).

<sup>67</sup> Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga (TsGA SPb), f. 7384, op. 36, d. 149, ll. 78-78ob.

<sup>68</sup> "Pis'ma v redaksiu – Na Mal'tsevskom rynke," *Leningradskaia pravda*, September 25, 1945, 3. On gambling at Leningrad's markets see Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevonnom Leningrade*, 43.

<sup>69</sup> "Pis'ma v redaksiu – O chistote na rynkakh," *Leningradskaia pravda*, April 24, 1946, 3

<sup>70</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevonnom Leningrade*, 105.

<sup>71</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7179, op. 53, d. 176.

<sup>72</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7179, op.53, d. 176, l.27.

<sup>73</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7179, op. 53, d. 176, l.29

<sup>74</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7179, op. 53, d. 176, ll. 78-79.

<sup>75</sup> On the continuing hostility towards individuals who had passed filtration see Nick Baron, "Remaking Soviet Society: The Filtration of Returnees from Nazi Germany, 1944-49," in *Warlands*, ed. Gatrell and Baron, 89-116.

<sup>76</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 276, l.19 and TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 277, ll. 47-51 (l. 50).

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- <sup>77</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 276, ll. 45-46 (l. 45).
- <sup>78</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 276, l. 48.
- <sup>79</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 276, ll. 47-51.
- <sup>80</sup> *Leningradskaia pravda*, October 23, 1945, 2; TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 25, d. 242, l. 4.
- <sup>81</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 276, l. 47.
- <sup>82</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Legacy of the Civil War," in *Party, State and Society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in Social History*, ed. Diane P. Koenker, William G. Rosenberg and Ronald G. Suny (Bloomington, 1989), 385-98.
- <sup>83</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 276, ll. 45-46; TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 276, ll. 47-51.
- <sup>84</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 276, l. 48.
- <sup>85</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 276, l. 46.
- <sup>86</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 276, ll. 47-51.
- <sup>87</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 406, l. 259.
- <sup>88</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, 67.
- <sup>89</sup> RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 78, ll. 41-46. Reprinted in Zubkova and Zhukova, eds., *Na "krai" sovetskogo obshchestva*, 117-120 (117).
- <sup>90</sup> GARF, f. A-339, op. 4, d. 355, l. 12, 29.
- <sup>91</sup> GARF, f. R-7523, op. 85, d. 2826, ll. 5-7. Reprinted in Zubkova and Zhukova, eds., *Na "krai" sovetskogo obshchestva*, 114-115.
- <sup>92</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI) f. 17, op. 117, d. 896, ll. 139-139ob. Reprinted in *Sovetskaia zhizn', 1945-1953*, ed. Elena Iu. Zubkova (Moscow, 2003), 36.
- <sup>93</sup> Iarovoi and Smirnova, *Valaamskie Ostrova*, 42-43. On the fascinating story of *jungi* see Olga Kucherenko, *Little Soldiers. How Soviet Children Went to War. 1941-1945* (Oxford, 2011), 228-48 (229 note 6).

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<sup>94</sup> “Sanatorii na ostrove. Valaamskii monastyr’ prevrashchaetsia v zdavnitsy,” *Vechernyi Leningrad*, July 13, 1946, 4.

<sup>95</sup> National’nyi Arkhiv Respubliki Karelia (NARK) f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1404, l. 189, 408.

<sup>96</sup> Kuznetsov, *Valaamskaia tetrad’*, 75.

<sup>97</sup> Iarovoi and Smirnova, *Valaamskie Ostrova*, 43.

<sup>98</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1404, l. 189, 196; Iarovoi and Smirnova, *Valaamskie Ostrova*, 43.

<sup>99</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1806, l. 412.

<sup>100</sup> Kuznetsov, *Valaamskaia tetrad’*, 80-81.

<sup>101</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 665, ll. 1-8.

<sup>102</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1806, l. 47.

<sup>103</sup> Iarovoi and Smirnova, *Valaamskie Ostrova*, 39-43.

<sup>104</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1404, l. 198.

<sup>105</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1404, l. 191, 201, 408 and NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1806, l. 45.

<sup>106</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1806, l. 47.

<sup>107</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1783, ll. 534-37.

<sup>108</sup> NARK, f. 690, op. 11, d. 517, ll. 178-80.

<sup>109</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1806, l. 412.

<sup>110</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1806, l. 19, 46; NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1404, l. 265.

<sup>111</sup> Kuznetsov, *Valaamskaia tetrad’*, 77.

<sup>112</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1404, l. 365, 410.

<sup>113</sup> NARK, f. 1394, op. 6, d. 1806, l. 18.

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<sup>114</sup> ‘Patriarch Kirill Christens New Memorial to WWII Veterans on Valaam’, July 11, 2011 Russkiy Mir Foundation Website. <http://www.ruskiymir.ru/ruskiymir/en/news/common/news3747.html> (Last accessed October 10, 2012 15.00). For photographs of the monument and dedication see the following post of the Voices from Russia blog <http://02varvara.wordpress.com/2011/07/18/patriarch-kirill-dedicates-memorial-to-disabled-vets-of-the-vov-on-valaam-on-10-july-2011/> (Last accessed October 10, 2012 15.00). The report on The Voice of Russia’s Website about the dedication of the memorial to war veterans on Valaam makes reference to an archive of over 200 personal files of invalids once resident on the island. ‘Valaam: a Graveyard for War Veterans’, Voice of Russia Website, <http://english.ruvr.ru/2011/07/12/53131150.html> (Last accessed October 10, 2012 15.10). These files should they ever become available to researchers represent the best opportunity for further research into conditions at the Valaam *dom invalidov*.

<sup>115</sup> Catherine Merridale, “The Collective Mind: Trauma and Shell-shock in Twentieth-Century Russia,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 35, No .1 (January 2000), 39-55 (39).

<sup>116</sup> See in particular Fieseler, “The bitter legacy of the ‘Great Patriotic War’”; Fieseler, “‘Nishche pobediteyl’”; Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, 81-101; Merridale, *Ivan’s War*, 313-315; Dale , “Re-adjusting to Life After War,” 144-192.

<sup>117</sup> Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin’s Genocides* (Princeton, 2010), 88.

<sup>118</sup> Pavel M. Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, trans. Anna Yastrzhembska (Budapest, 2004), 98-103; Naimark, *Stalin’s Genocides*, 87.

<sup>119</sup> Polian, *Against Their Will*; see also Jeffrey Burds, “The Soviet War against “Fifth Columnists”: The Case of Chechnya, 1942-44,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (April 2007), 267-314.

<sup>120</sup> Naimark, *Stalin’s Genocides*, 95.

<sup>121</sup> Jonathan Brent and Vladimir P. Naumov, *Stalin’s Last Crime. The Doctors’ Plot* (London: John Murray, 2003), 283, 297-98.

<sup>122</sup> Elena Zubkova suggests that the boundary between war and post-war recovery came between 1947 and 1948. Zubkova, *After the War*, 102. Filtzer argues that the fundamental turning point, after which the regime had regained control, came in 1948 or 1949. Donald Filtzer, *Sovier Workers and Late Stalinism. Labour and the*

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*Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II* (Cambridge, 2002), 258. Gorlizki and Khlevniuk argue that a thorough-going reorganization of the of the highest reaches of the political and economic system was launched in 1947, and by 1948 the main targets of post-war reconstruction had been achieved. Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace. Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953* (Oxford, 2004), 7, 69.

<sup>123</sup> Oleg Leibovich, *V gorode M. Ocherki sotial'noi povsednevnosti sovetskoi provintsii* (Moscow, 2008), 1.

<sup>124</sup> Mark Edele, 'Soviet veterans as an entitlement group, 1945-1955,' *Slavic Review*, Vol. 65, No. 1(Spring 2006), 111-137 (121).

<sup>125</sup> On the 1947 currency reform see L. N. Dobrokhoto et. al. (eds.), *Denezhnaia reforma v SSSR 1947 goda. Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow, 2010). On changes to post-war trade and consumption see Julie Hessler, 'Postwar Normalisation and its Limits in the USSR: The Case of Trade', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (May 2001), 445-471, and idem, *A Social History of Soviet Trade. Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917-1953* (Princeton, 2004), 296-328.

<sup>126</sup> A similar point if made by Fieseler, "'La Protection Social Totale'", 438-439.

<sup>127</sup> Andrew A. Gentes, "The Institution of Russia's Sakhalin Policy, from 1868 to 1875," *Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2002), 1-31 (1).

<sup>128</sup> Anne Applebaum, *GULAG. A History of the Soviet Camps* (London, 2003), 40-58 (42); Roy R. Robson, *Solovki. The Story of Russia Told Through Its Most Remarkable Islands* (New Haven, 2004), 202-225; Nick Baron, "Conflict and Complicity: The Expansion of the Karelian Gulag, 1923-1933," *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, Vol.42, Nos.2-4 (April - December 2001), 615-648 and Dmitrii S. Likhachev, *Reflections on the Russian Soul – A Memoir*, trans. Bernard Adams, ed. A. R. Tulloch (Budapest, 2000).

<sup>129</sup> For a full account of what happened at Nazino and the decisions and deportation that led to this situation see Nicolas Werth, *Cannibal Island. Death in a Siberian Gulag*, trans. Steven Rendall (Princeton, 2007). On deportations to Western Siberia, including Nazino, see Sergei Krasil'nikov, *Serp i Molokh. Krest'ianskaia ssylka v Zapadnoi Sibiri v 1930-e gody* (Moscow, 2009).

<sup>130</sup> Werth, *Cannibal Island*, 151.

<sup>131</sup> Werth, *Cannibal Island*, 113.

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<sup>132</sup> Werth, *Cannibal Island*, 96, 115.

<sup>133</sup> Werth, *Cannibal Island*, 94-101, 111-15

<sup>134</sup> For example see: "Zabota ob invalidakh otechestvennoi voyny," *Vechernii Leningrad*, December 17, 1945, 1; "Zabota ob invalidakh," *Vechernii Leningrad*, February 16, 1946, 1; "Zabota ob invalidakh otechestvennyi voyny," *Vechernii Leningrad*, April 20, 1946, 1; "Bol'shaia zabota. Invalidy otechestvennoi voyny na proizvodstve," *Vechernii Leningrad*, August 24, 1946, 1; "Zabota ob invalidakh Otechestvennoi voyny," *Trud*, April 2, 1946, 4.

<sup>135</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7384, op. 36, d. 149, l. 4.

<sup>136</sup> Robert Dale, "Rats and Resentment: The Demobilization of the Red Army in Postwar Leningrad, 1945-50," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (January 2010), 113-133 (129-131); idem, "Re-adjusting to Life After War," 152-171.

<sup>137</sup> Zubkova, *Russia after the War* (Armonk, 1998), 24; E. S. Seniavskaia, *1941-1945. Frontovoe pokolenie* (Moscow, 1995), 32.

<sup>138</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 7179, op. 53, d. 110, l. 20ob.

<sup>139</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, 89. See also his discussion on conditions in four invalids' homes in Saratov province.

<sup>140</sup> Leningradskii oblastnoi gosudarstvenni arkhiv v gorode Vyborge (LOGAV) f. R-2798, op. 1, d. 65, ll. 2-75.

<sup>141</sup> LOGAV, f. R-2798, op. 1, d. 65, l. 6ob.

<sup>142</sup> LOGAV, f. R-2798, op. 1, d. 65, l. 42.

<sup>143</sup> LOGAV, f. R-2798, op. 1, d. 65, ll. 7ob-9.

<sup>144</sup> LOGAV, f. R-2798, op. 1, f. 65, l. 7ob.

<sup>145</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 9156, op. 4, d. 488, l. 75, 96.

<sup>146</sup> "Novyi gosptal' dlia invalidov voyny," *Leningradskaia pravda*, August 11, 1946, 3.



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<sup>147</sup> Today the imposing building houses part of the National Library of Russia, including its newspaper collection.

<sup>148</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 9156, op. 4, d. 488, l. 73.

<sup>149</sup> TsGA SPb, f. 9156, op. 4, d. 488, l. 97; Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi atkhi istoriko-politicheskikh dokumentov Sankt-Peterburga (TsGAIPD SPb) f. 25, op. 12, d. 435, ll. 11-13.

<sup>150</sup> Y. Zh. Sh. Dondukov, "Moia ucheba na vostochnom fakul'tete i moi uchitelii," in *Vospominaniia vypusknikov Vostochnogo fakul'teta Leningradskogo (Sankt-Petersburgskogo) universiteta poslevoennykh let (1948-1952)*, ed. O.I. Aleksandrova et. al., (St. Petersburg, 2001), 91-102 (100).

<sup>151</sup> Fieseler, "The Bitter Legacy," 54; "Vsemerno pomagat proizvodstvu protezov," *Trud*, April 19, 1946, 3; "Ob'edinit' delo protezirovaniia," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, August 21, 1948, 2; "Eshche raz o protezirovanii," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, September 11, 1948, 2.

<sup>152</sup> Seth Koven, "Remembering and Dismemberment: Crippled Children, Wounded Soldiers, and the Great War in Great Britain," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No. 4 (Oct. 1994), 1167-1202 (1195).

<sup>153</sup> Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time. Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*, Enlarged and updated edition (Durham, NC., 1990).

<sup>154</sup> On the difficulties of the prosthetics industry in Leningrad see "Soveshchanie po voprosy o protezirovanii," *Leningradskaiia Pravda*, June 18, 1946, 4; TsGA SPb, f. 24, op. 2v, d. 7017, ll. 12-14 and Dale, "Re-adjusting to Life After War," 175-176.

<sup>155</sup> Anna Krylova, "'Healers of Wounded Souls,' The Crisis of Private Life in Soviet Literature, 1944-1946," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (June 2001), 307-331 (324-425).

<sup>156</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 317